2. Cults

793 787 794 756 * Each of these gods is worshipped by specific cults; each has his specific priest whom he "enters" from time to time, makes him "possessed," and lets him prophesy and perform feats of magic. There are male and female priests. Allegedly the female ones remain unmarried. Divine power and inspiration and the predisposition for being possessed are in most cases passed on from father to son or daughter in the same manner as the power to heal and to raise spirits which is held by the medicine men (abafumu).

793 In Urundi these priests are called iviranga (sing. kiranga); in Ruanda, imandwa; in Kisiba, wabandwa. Among the persons who dedicate themselves to the cult of gods and spirits, the kiranga most of all has the character and functions of the priest in our sense. He has the same name as the god Kiranga (derived from the word root kira, to put in order), and he is regarded both as the representative and as the ambulatory abode of the god himself. Men or women become kiranga either because their fathers or mothers were kiranga and transmitted this talent after their death or as a result of having been struck but not killed by lightning, the sign of the power of the god (No. 19, p. 253), or they are seized by the spirit and enter a state of [828] manic possession at the Kubandwa celebration or the "sacred spear" ceremony (cf. p. 134). As soon as such happenings and conditions make their appearance, the person in question is declared a kiranga and has to officiate at the ceremonies of the holy spear which are performed on so many occasions (No. 19, pp. 462-463) and to mediate between humanity, suffering or filled with metaphysical urges, and the spirits and gods.

791 As has been mentioned before, in Ruanda the ecstatic mediators of the world of the spirits are called imandwa. They are male or female, divinely chosen mediums of one of the principal spirits, i.e., either Riangombe, Binego, Mugassa, or others. Depending on this association with a particular god, they have to adorn themselves in a fashion different from the others. They have to express themselves by growling, hissing,

4: Maquet E-5 (1950-1951) 1954 FO42 Rundi FO42

other hand, got it by his sobriety and cleverness. Kazikamuntu then chose Gatutsi to be the chief of the brothers. There are numerous versions of this tale. Moreover, the stories concerning man's creation are often inextricably mixed with the legends about the arrival of the Batutsi in Ruanda. The same names appear sometimes in the creation, sometimes in the conquest stories. In general the latter are better known. The summary given above is thus only one of the various accounts of the origin of mankind.

According to a widely known folk-tale, Death, personalized as a sort of animal, was hunted by *Imana*. He told all men to stay at home in order that Death should not find a hiding-place. An old woman, however, went out to work in her banana-grove. Death, pursued by *Imana*, asked her protection. Moved by pity, she let the animal hide under her skirt. *Imana*, in order to punish her, decided then that death should stay with men. This story might perhaps suggest a belief that there was a time when men did not die. But we could not find other elements to corroborate that interpretation.

On the ontological character of man two points are certain. First, an adult human being is considered to be different from an animal by virtue of his faculty of speech (*kivuga*), his intelligence (*ubwenge*), and his will (*ugushaka*); but the difference, if any, between a small child and an animal is not quite clear. Second, no one of these attributes is equated with the surviving spirit (*muzimu*). There is something in the human being which, after his death, becomes *muzimu*, but there is no agreement as to what it is. According to a fairly common opinion, the *muzimu* is the metamorphosis of the *igicucu*, the shadow cast by the body in sunshine. But according to some informants, this shadow is only an image of the spiritual shadow which is the essence of the post-mortem spirit. In conformity with that opinion, the living man is said to be made of three components: the body (*mubili*) which, after death, becomes a corpse (*murambo*); life (*buzima*), which disappears; and the shadow (*igucucu*) from which the surviving spirit (*muzimu*) results.

The heart is believed to be the seat of intelligence and affectivity. It is conceived as a single organ although some ways of speaking suggest that it is double. For instance, it is frequently said: 'One heart told me this, one heart told me that.' This is another application of the habit of attributing opposed effects of the same cause to several causes, but this is only a verbal habit which does not deceive anybody.

These uncertainties regarding the nature of man indicate that Banyarwanda do not make any clear-cut distinction between the concepts of body and mind. Although they recognize parts in man, they prefer to consider the unit rather than its components.

Whatever the culture, human experience is made up of a sequence of events and activities, such as working, eating, sleeping, maturing, suffering, mating, getting old, and dying. What is the Ruanda attitude in face of these universals of human life? In many societies these happenings are considered not in their naked reality but in terms of the beliefs held as true in the particular culture. For instance, in a society with a Christian ideology, to

4: Maquet E-5 (1950-1951) 1954 FO42 Rundi FO42

a very considerable extent universality and absoluteness, qualifies some of its commands. The degree of absoluteness and universality of the Ruanda rules of conduct is much lower. We might say that most of its precepts are qualified in relation to persons and circumstances. To steal cattle was forbidden, but a Mututsi could take the cattle of a Muhutu who had no lord. For a Muhutu to rob a foreigner was not forbidden. A wife might not commit adultery, but she was allowed to have sexual relations with people when ordered by her husband to do so and, even without her husband's permission, a woman could have intercourse with her husband's brothers and parallel cousins. Killing a man was prohibited, but not if he was an enemy of Ruanda or of the family, and if the feud had not been barred by the king. Banyarwanda certainly had no idea of rules of behaviour applicable to all men in virtue of their common humanity. This is perfectly consistent with the Ruanda conception of mankind and the very significant inequalities which Banyarwanda observe between themselves and neighbouring peoples and, among themselves, between the different castes.

To conclude, the rules of human action which prohibit or enjoin the use of certain means in order to achieve the culturally recognized values of Ruanda are sanctioned, not only by organized and unorganized social reactions but also by individual conscience or guilt feelings. The foundation of this moral code is not religious or supernatural but traditional; its content is a multiplicity of rules synthesized under a few moral principles. Particular precepts do not have a universal application but are relative to persons and groups.

Human Relations

Two principles dominate the field of human relations in Ruanda: inequality of men and indefinite reciprocity.

For the Banyarwanda all men have indeed a common nature; they are ultimately the descendants of the same ancestor. But this notion does not seem to be very significant, for Banyarwanda are much more impressed by the differences displayed by the various castes. The characteristics of these castes are stereotyped and repeated in many folk-tales. Batutsi are intelligent (in the sense of astute in political intrigues), apt to command, refined, courageous, and cruel. Bahutu are hard-working, not very clever, extrovert, irascible, unmannerly, obedient, physically strong. Batwa are gluttonous, loyal to their Batutsi masters, lazy, courageous when hunting, lacking in restraint. These characteristics, with differences in stress and shading, are generally recognized by all Banyarwanda. As they reflect the Mututsi point of view, it appears that the superior caste has been able to make other people see themselves in important respects as Batutsi see them. Moreover, those qualities are considered to be innate, not acquired. A Mututsi is born clever and a Muhutu impulsive. Some tales, more widely known than those concerning the creation of man, relate how the first Batutsi came to Ruanda

9:Maquet E-5 (1949-1951)1961 FO42 Rundi FO42

cultural premise underlying the social roles of the ruler and the subject.

We have seen that Ruanda society is made up of three hereditary groups with a very different participation in social power and that these differences were explained in terms of innate qualities. On the other hand, in a very great proportion of the political and feudal relations, the superior and the inferior belong to different castes. This indicates in what sense Ruanda feel men to be unequal.

This was not an inequality founded on differences in individual qualities or possessions. Of course, a very clever and artful man, a very wealthy possessor of great herds of cattle, could exert much greater influence, could have access to many more amenities of life and would command much more respect than a not very intelligent or a not very wealthy man. But these differences were not regarded as entailing such a significant inequality between them if they belonged to the same caste. Caste affiliation was mainly what made men unequal.

Several stories expressed the differences between the three castes and the qualities which were thought characteristic of them.[6] I mentioned above physical stereotypes. To them, moral qualities were added. Tutsi were said to be intelligent (in the sense of astute in political intrigues), capable of command, refined, courageous, and cruel; Hutu, hardworking, not very clever, extrovert, irascible, unmannerly, obedient, physically strong; Twa, gluttonous, loyal to their Tutsi masters, lazy, courageous when hunting, without any restraint. These stereotypes, admitted with only minor qualifications and slight differences and emphases by all Ruanda, Hutu and Twa as well as Tutsi, were thought to be essentially linked to caste affiliation. When asked if a Hutu brought up with Tutsi, and as a Tutsi boy, could not develop the Tutsi qualities, Hutu and Tutsi informants answer that such a training could change the boy to some extent, but not completely; the differences pertain to nature.

Caste status was, of course, not founded on a difference of qualities, objective or assumed, in the sense that if a particular Hutu was recognized as intelligent and courageous as a Tutsi, his status remained nevertheless unaffected. What mattered primarily indeed was not to have the qualifications of the upper caste, but to have been born in it. This was sufficient to determine a very

[6] Cf. for instance Sandrart, 1930, p. 139; Hursl, 1928.

431 he will not give; and if he wishes, he will take back what he has
554 already given in order to give it to someone he likes better. An inferior, whether it be the serf of a Tutsi or a wife in relation to her husband, can protest only in vain that he has worked hard, that he has always been docile and obedient, that he has always liked and respected his superior. There are no formal sanctions against a superior who accepts services and goods from his inferior and gives him nothing in return. However, there are more subtle
431 measures to be taken against him. An inferior, if he has any
554 alternative open to him, will abandon an ungenerous superior.
626 Sometimes a Tutsi deserts a prince who has not given him cows or a subchiefdom, in order to enter service with one who is more
[564] generous and powerful. A son may leave the property of his father if he is not satisfied with his heritage and will enter service with a stranger who promises to give him lands and cows. A woman will
[593] return to her father's home if her husband mistreats her, and ask her father to find her a better husband. When those who are dissatisfied complain publicly about ungenerous superiors, they will have difficulty in replacing the inferiors who desert them. However, if one does not find another superior with whom to take refuge, it is necessary to stay with the bad one and to resign oneself to unhappiness, sometimes to hunger, sometimes to death. For,
554 physical violence is the privilege of the superior. It is up to him to
681 instruct and correct his inferiors by words and blows. Or, if he is in a bad humour, his inferiors are always around, and he can take
[861] out his displeasure on them. Children expect to be beaten by their
566 parents, serfs and servants by their master and mistress, and a
[593] woman, even an *imfura*, considers it quite normal for her husband to beat her, especially if she has been difficult or if he has had a good deal to drink. According to the ideal, a superior is always benevolent, generous, wise and just. Beating does not suggest a lack of affection. If the superior does not give presents to his inferior, then it is known that he does not like him.

431 In principle, *umutima*, sentiment (literally, "the heart"), is always
554 combined with the material value of a gift. *Urukundo*, love or affection, rather than law or rights, explains the gifts of superiors
828 and the services rendered by inferiors. It is possible that the Rundi insist so much upon the importance of sentiment and love because they have so little of them. However this may be, there is no
[162] doubting their joy and sense of well-being when they receive even the smallest present. However, they mistrust *urukundo:* love can change to hate very quickly, they say. Inferiors are always afraid that the superior will stop liking them or will send them packing

10:Albert E-5 (1956-1957)1963
FO42 Rundi FO42

or will take back the cow he has given. In turn, superiors consider defection and disloyalty as the worst of crimes. Even if a servant is insolent and lazy, he will be well taken care of if he always tells his master whatever news and rumours he has heard about him. A woman who is disagreeable, lazy or even sterile will not be chased from the household if she is clever in helping her husband with his business and if she never speaks ill of him. An individual may have confidence only in his blood-friend, male or female. However, occasionally, true friendship ties a vassal to his chief or a *mwami-kazi* to her confidential servant. In these secure and friendly relationships, the principals tell each other their troubles, give each other advice, and remain loyal to each other forever. It is a matter for much discussion when a husband and wife stay together for 20 years, both married and mutually affectionate. However, neighbours, acquaintances, relatives, and spouses, it is said, do not remain friendly for a very long time. Several months, at most two or three years, suffice to create reasons for hatred, jealousy, vengeance, burning a house, calumny, fights, and visits to the witch to obtain poison.

The maximum of instability is associated with the role of the *abatoni*, the favourites. Fierce rivalry is considered normal among inferiors of the same rank—the men of the princely courts, brothers, plural wives, the servants of the Tutsi. The favourite son or wife is envied by his or her peers and must expect quarrels, poison and calumny. Because a superior may easily change his mind about a favourite, someone else will wait hopefully to take his place, In fact, happiness—many children, a good harvest, a cow which gives much milk, a present large or small—is the mark of the favourites of *Imana* and of human beings. One has received, one is liked by a superior, one is hated by all those who have not received. By this syllogism, it is logical for a rich Tutsi to be jealous both of a poor Hutukazi who has just received from her son-in-law a length of cheap cotton cloth and of a rich Tutsi who has just received another cow. To receive and be liked are identical. Together, they constitute the core of the well-being of inferiors.

Although *ubgenge*, intelligence, is normally accounted an attribute of superiors, it is well understood that inferiors have great need of it. The superior must be intelligent in order to exercise his authority, to judge well of his inferiors, to know the right moment to give and to take back. The *ubgenge* of an inferior has obviously to be of another kind. His goal is to make his superior like him. He must therefore understand his character, his moods, his fears, his desires. He must learn how to flatter him and to seem

10:Albert E-5 (1956-1957)1963
FO42 Rundi FO42

their friends, especially if they are away from home. A wife who always gives abundant beer and food to her husband's friends is, by so doing, showing respect for her husband.

Beauty does not count very heavily, but a man is not displeased if people notice that his wife is attractive and well-fleshed, has a long and narrow nose, a light skin, and is somewhat like a cow. If a woman is fortunate, she will have a child every two years, and the children will not die. One of the most fortunate women of whom the Rundi spoke—a Tutsikazi *imfura*, needless to say—gave birth to a child virtually every 11 months. The husband of a wife who produces many children is a real man, and people always speak highly of the fathers of many children.

A husband supervises his wife, as every superior supervises his inferiors, and he must punish her if she does not do as she ought. Hence, a Tutsi will not hesitate to go to see whether all the clothes he has given his wife are in the baskets that serve as wardrobes for women. He also goes to see if everything is clean. If he is not satisfied, he will warn his wife that she must change her ways. Sometimes she makes excuses. Perhaps she has not worked well because she has been ill, or because she had to do a great deal of work for her mother-in-law, because several of the workers have run off to Uganda, because her husband ordered more work than she had strength to do. A considerate husband will check up on his wife's explanations. If he is satisfied that they are correct, he will do his best to see that she has help, even if he has to help her himself. A man of bad character, however, does not accept any excuses. He will beat his wife, he will insult her, and she can expect to be sent back home, unless she becomes angry and goes back without waiting to be sent.

The Rundi speak a great deal about "good character" and "bad character". Character, for them, explains most of human behaviour. Obviously, the ideal marriage unites a woman of good character with a man of good character. However, there are a great many people of bad character, probably most people. This explains, they say, the numerous quarrels and divorces. People know what they ought to do, but they don't do it. In all truth, a young woman lives like a nomad. She goes from her father's home to the home of her first husband, then after quarrels or divorce back again to her father, then to a second husband, then back to her father, until at last she finds a husband who pleases her and who at the same time is pleased with her. Divorce is forbidden those who are Catholics. Nevertheless, for them as for the other Rundi, married life is no more peaceful than any other interpersonal relationship among the